

Books

Gastroenterology in the Tropics and Subtropics. A Practical Approach

By David Watters and Clement Kiire. Pp. xvii + 439. Illustrated. £30.95. Hampshire: Macmillan. 1995. ISBN 0-333-59343-X.

The authors of the book are very well known in their respective countries and in the field of gastroenterology. Professor Watters is associated with the Department of Surgery at the University of Papua, New Guinea and Professor Clement Kiire is the Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of Zimbabwe. This book is of importance especially in the light of the newly formed African Federation for Gastroenterology, of which Kiire is one of the co-founders.

This book is not intended as a textbook for the gastroenterologist, but as a practical guide to help all clinicians in trying to solve gastrointestinal problems at the patient's bedside.

The first chapter deals with the organisation of a gastrointestinal unit and some guidelines are given regarding equipment and – most important – their upkeep in a Third World situation.

The chapters are clearly delineated with the presenting symptoms as the heading. Attention is given to the history and where possible the most commonly associated pathogens for the different areas are stated. The clinical examination is described in a step-wise manner and many of the descriptions are accompanied by case histories.

Specific infections causing diarrhoea, like cholera, typhoid and amoebiasis are described in a separate chapter. In the chapter on HIV infection in the gastrointestinal tract, attention is given to the secondary infections of this disease. A few words on one of the other problems with HIV infection, namely sclerosing cholangitis, would have made this chapter more complete.

The book is written for the clinician, but a chapter on laboratory results and their interpretation would have been most helpful, for example, the differentiation between transudate and exudate and the biochemistry thereof would have been more meaningful with the list of the common causes of ascites.

In summary, the book is written clearly and, as the title indicates, with a practical approach to gastrointestinal diseases occurring most commonly in developing countries. Medical students, nurses and paramedical workers will also benefit from this book and not only in the countries situated in tropics and subtropics, but also in the rest of South Africa.

The authors and publishers of this book must be congratulated for the way in which they responded to the needs of tropical and subtropical countries.

J H Van Zyl

Immunization in Practice. A Guide for Health Workers who Give Vaccines

WHO. Pp. 360. Illustrated. £6.75. Basingstoke: MacMillan Education Ltd. 1996. ISBN 0-333-63095-5.

South Africa has made encouraging progress in its immunization coverage in recent years, albeit a little later than its neighbours. The presence however of at least two babies with tetanus at any one time in our intensive care unit in Durban indicates that there is still work to be done. This handbook from the WHO is for the use of trainers of those working on the frontline of the EPI programme. The first chapters detail the methods of steam and water sterilisation of equipment and the handling of vaccines while in refrigerators in the clinic and after removal for vaccination sessions in the clinic and under trees. Reconstitution and injection methods are well described with the aid of clear, useful drawings.

The section on contra-indications indicates clearly that there are almost none to immunization, and if a child is well enough to go home, he is well enough to go home immunized. A previous convulsion or shock after DPT vaccine is the only firm contra-indication given. There are good sections on outreach sessions and the need for community consultation and feedback. Styles of health education and the importance of friendly and respectful attitudes to mothers and children are dealt with briefly but effectively. Simple methods of evaluating the effectiveness of a local immunization programme are described and every few pages throughout the book there is an exercise or case study designed to evaluate the learning of the reader. My only criticism of this is that there are no page references for the answers at the back of the book which makes the process a little laborious. Apart from this the manual is clearly written in simple English with effective illustrations and is suitable for health workers for whom English is a second language and who are working under technologically unsophisticated conditions.

Ian Topley

The Newborn Baby

Third edition. By VC Harrison, MP Keet and SCL Shore. Pp. vii + 385. Illustrated. R99. Kenwyn: Juta & Co Ltd. 1996. ISBN 0-7021-3327-2.

This has been a popular book since it was first published in 1978 and, as indicated in the introduction, concentrates on describing features of the normal baby, standard care of newborn babies, and 'offers a practical approach for those who plan to nurse or treat newborn babies'. The early chapters contain very good sections on physical examination and breast-feeding, and these are followed by chapters that are easily readable and well organised on the various systems and concentrate appropriately on primary and secondary level aspects of care. Some sections, such as that on the management of neonatal jaundice, have not been fully updated to include newer approaches, and the use of silver nitrate for prophylaxis of ophthalmia neonatorum is still advocated.

The book perhaps lacks a strong Southern African perspective that would have given it wider appeal. For example, the wide variation in fontanelle size amongst African babies is not mentioned; strategies to cope with the large number of babies born to mothers who have received inadequate treatment for syphilis are not addressed, while the incidence quoted for phenylketonuria is not applicable locally. Nevertheless, this edition should prove once again to be popular amongst midwives, neonatal nurses and doctors involved in the care of new-born babies and is very good value for money.

P A Cooper

The Management of Acute Respiratory Infections in Children

Practical Guidelines for Outpatient Care. WHO. Pp. v + 77. Illustrated. SwFr15/US\$13.50. Geneva: WHO. 1995. ISBN 92-4-154477-5.

Acute respiratory infections are in many parts of South Africa responsible for the largest proportion of deaths in children under 5 years of age. It is estimated that 40 - 60% of children attending outpatients have respiratory disease. This book issued by the World Health Organization is targeted at supervisors or other health staff working in first level health facilities who are responsible for the care of children. The book explains how to recognize children with pneumonia, assess the severity of the disease and advise treatment. Included in the book are easily understood management charts that can be used in everyday practice. These charts should be available in all outpatient clinics as they are of immense value in treating children suspected of having pneumonia.

The explanations of the guidelines are clear and practical. The chapters are divided into practical sections. The management guidelines have been tested in various parts of the world and can be used where limited facilities are available.

The book does not only contain guidelines on the treatment of pneumonia, but also has chapters on the management of a child with a sore ear and throat. The explanation of their evaluation and treatment is similarly easy to understand and is backed up with management charts.

The implementation of these simple guidelines in other parts of the developing world has led to a decrease in mortality from pneumonia by up to 40%. It is time they become part of the standard management of children with pneumonia in South Africa. This approach should be part of all medical students' curriculae. I would therefore recommend that this book be read by all categories of health care workers looking after children, from academics to health care workers in primary clinics. The Health authorities are soon going to recommend the standardized treatment of pneumonia for children. This book will be an essential aid when this occurs.

R P Gie